

RETRO ROCKETS

for use with

THRILLING
TALES

Number One



by Gareth-Michael Skarka & Philip Reed



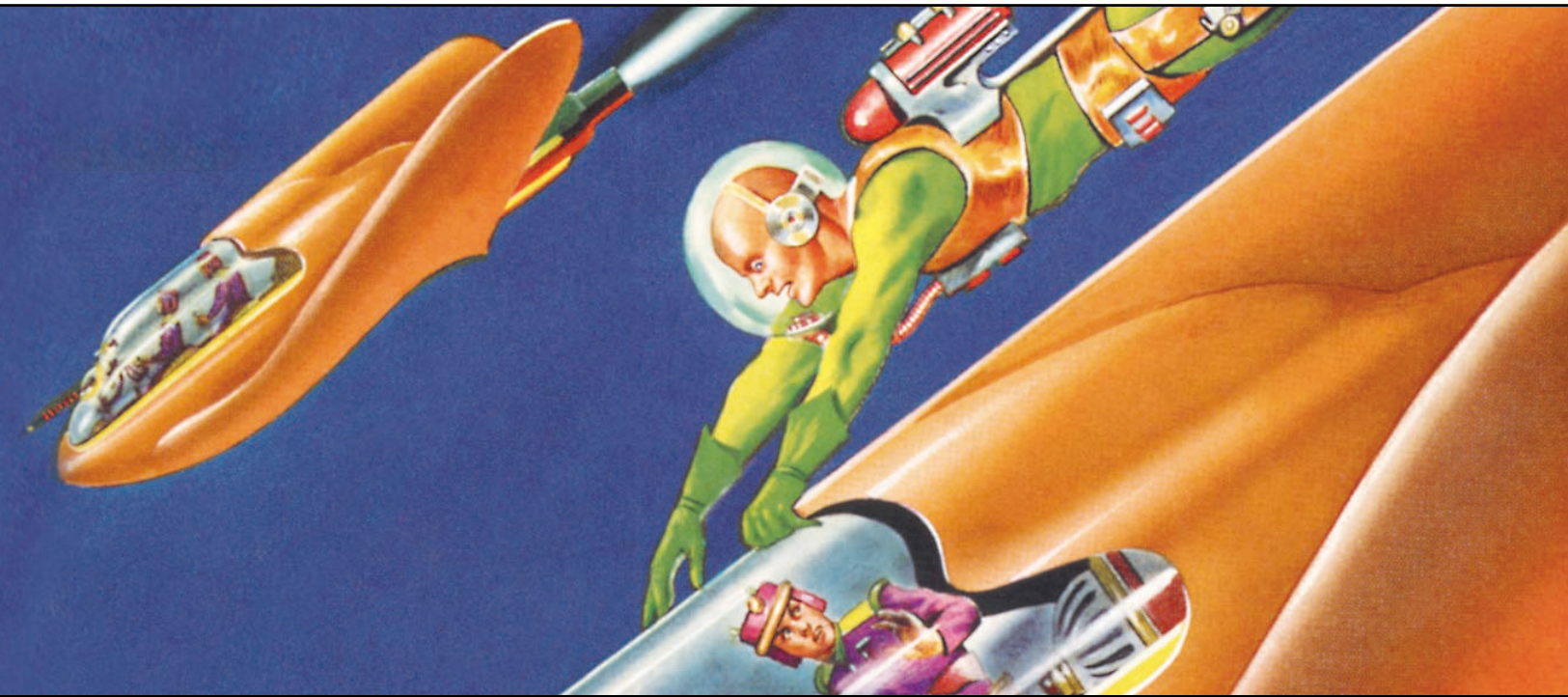
■ Introduction

Welcome to the first installment of *Retro Rockets*, a series detailing pulp-SF rocket ships for your d20 campaigns.

Science fiction pulps were heavy on the “fiction” and light on the “science.” Man’s first ventures into orbit and beyond were still decades away, and many of the things that we now know about space travel were merely theories at the time. The writers of the pulps concentrated on bringing readers fast-paced adventure tales, liberally seasoned with things that sounded vaguely scientific, to give the stories a futuristic sheen. To today’s audience, phrases like “atomic ray pistol” “electro suits” and “radio rangers” sound absurd, but to the pulp reader of the time, they were full of wonder and possibility.

One of the first jobs that a Game Master running a pulp SF campaign will have to do is to communicate these sorts of expectations to the players. 21st century players will have to willingly suspend their disbelief, and go with the feel of things. Sure, we now know that there is no use for aerodynamics in outer space.... but you know what? It doesn’t matter. Wings and fins on a starship look cool.... and maneuvers like banking, power dives and barrel rolls are exciting.

These rocket ships are written up as vehicles, using the standard Modern D20 vehicle format. Game masters wishing to use the Future SRD can adapt the vessel with that system’s starship rules – although, as presented in the pulps, these ships are universally treated more like traditional aircraft than starships .



Written by **Gareth-Michael Skarka**
Illustrations and layout by **Philip Reed**

www.roninarts.com

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■ The Lunar Leaper

The Leaper is the invention of famed science hero Doctor Erasmus Quinn. It was the vehicle that carried Quinn and his World Class Irregulars on their voyage to the Moon (the tale, featuring the theft of the Koh-I-Noor diamond, a strange woman from the future, and the deadly return of Hassan I Sabbah, is of course well-known, and requires no further explanation here).

The vehicle represents a standard exploratory model, perfect for carrying teams of PCs and their

equipment to far-off locations. *The Lunar Leaper* can be operated by a single pilot, but on space journeys, the presence of a navigator to correctly plot the vessel's course, as well as a co-pilot to assist in operations, is recommended. *The Lunar Leaper* also has space for up to 6 additional passengers.

The vessel is lightly armed – carrying a single laser gun for defense (you never know what you might find in the darkness of space, after all).

Crew: 3
Passengers: 6
Cargo: 9,000 lb.
Init: -4
Maneuver: -4
Top Speed: 325 (32)*
Defense: 6
Hardness: 5
Hit Points: 60
Size: G
Purchase DC: 35
Restriction: Mil (+3)

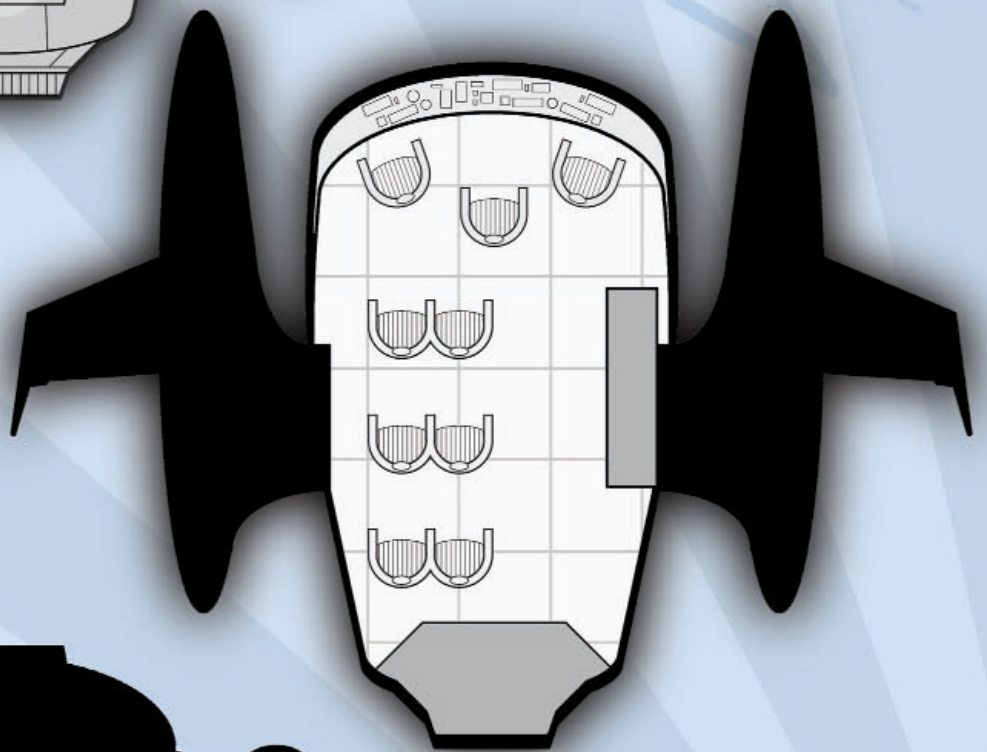
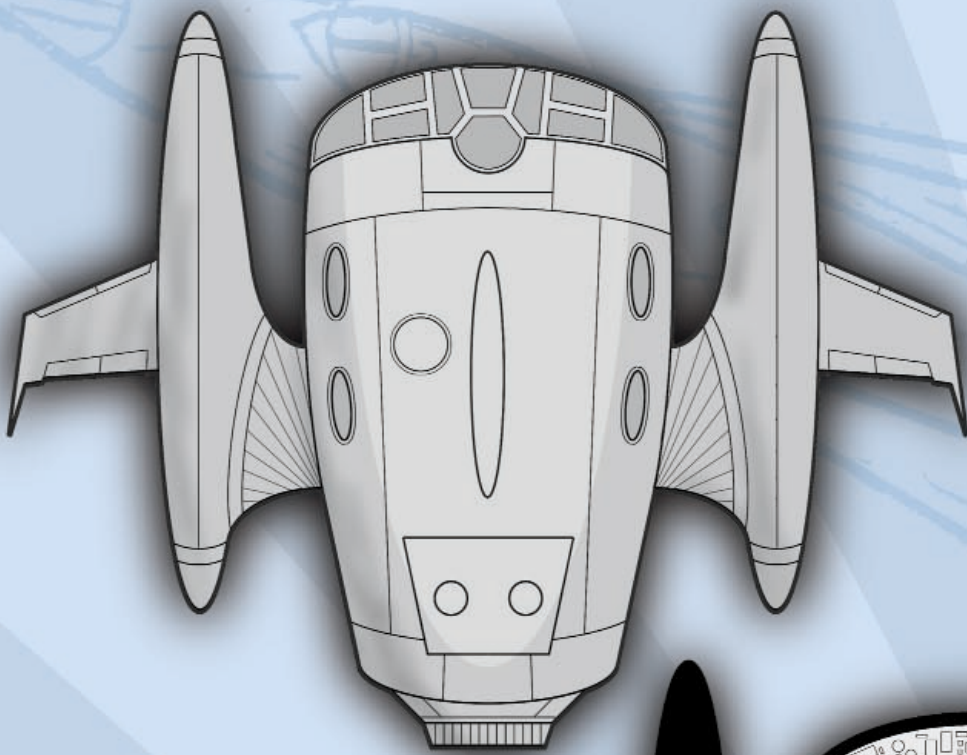
* This is obviously way too slow to achieve escape velocity, much less reach the Moon in any reasonable amount of time. It's pulp. Get over it.

Laser Gun: *The Lunar Leaper* mounts a single laser gun in a retractable 360 degree turret on the dorsal (top) side of the vessel.

Damage: 2d8
Critical: 20
Damage Type: Fire
Range Increment: 120 feet
Rate of Fire: Single
Magazine: Unlimited (runs off the atomic reactor that powers *The Lunar Leaper*)
Size: Large
Weight: 50 lbs (weapon only – the turret weighs considerably more)
Purchase DC: included with the vehicle
Restriction: Mil (+3)

Adventure Hooks

- *The Lunar Leaper* is invented by one of the player-characters (or, barring that, an NPC scientist of the PC's acquaintance), in response to mysterious signals emanating from the Moon. The PCs travel to the Moon, and discover a sinister race of Moon Men intent upon invading the Earth! Can our heroes put a stop to the evil machinations of the Moon Men?
- In a futuristic pulp-SF setting, the PCs are a group of prisoners, captured by the evil forces of the oppressive government. During a routine transfer between a prison ship and a penal colony planet, the prisoners rise up and hijack the transfer vessel (a *Lunar Leaper*), using it to escape. They are, of course, pursued by agents of the government....and perhaps some of the PCs are not wrongfully-imprisoned heroes after all, but opportunistic criminals – after all, just because the government is evil and oppressive doesn't mean that there aren't actual villains in their jails....



■ The Lunar Leaper

■ The Rocket Ranger

The workhorse of Earth's defenders, the Rocket Patrol. *The Rocket Ranger* is a single-seat interceptor and space-superiority fighter, used by the Patrol for system defense. Squadrons of *Rocket Rangers* are a common sight patrolling the shipping lanes, keeping a watchful eye out for pirates, as well as lining the runways of Rocket Patrol bases throughout the solar sys-

tem, ready to launch at a moment's notice against any extra-solar threat.

The Ranger is piloted by a single Rocket Patrolman. It is armed with two Vortex Cannons (mounted on wings away from the main fuselage), making it more than a match for most pirate vessels or alien invaders.

Crew: 1

Passengers: 1

Cargo: 120 lb.

Init: -2

Maneuver: -2

Top Speed: 900 (90)

Defense: 6

Hardness: 10

Hit Points: 40

Size: G

Purchase DC: 45

Restriction: Mil (+3)

Vortex Cannon: *The Rocket Ranger* mounts two of these weapons, which can be fired separately, or linked together in a single attack (double the damage, but reduce the top speed of the *Rocket Ranger* by half for the next two turns).

Damage: 2d12

Critical: 20

Damage Type: Energy

Range Increment: 200 feet

Rate of Fire: Single

Magazine: Unlimited (runs off the atomic reactor that powers *The Rocket Ranger*)

Size: Large

Weight: 80 lbs

Purchase DC: included with the vehicle

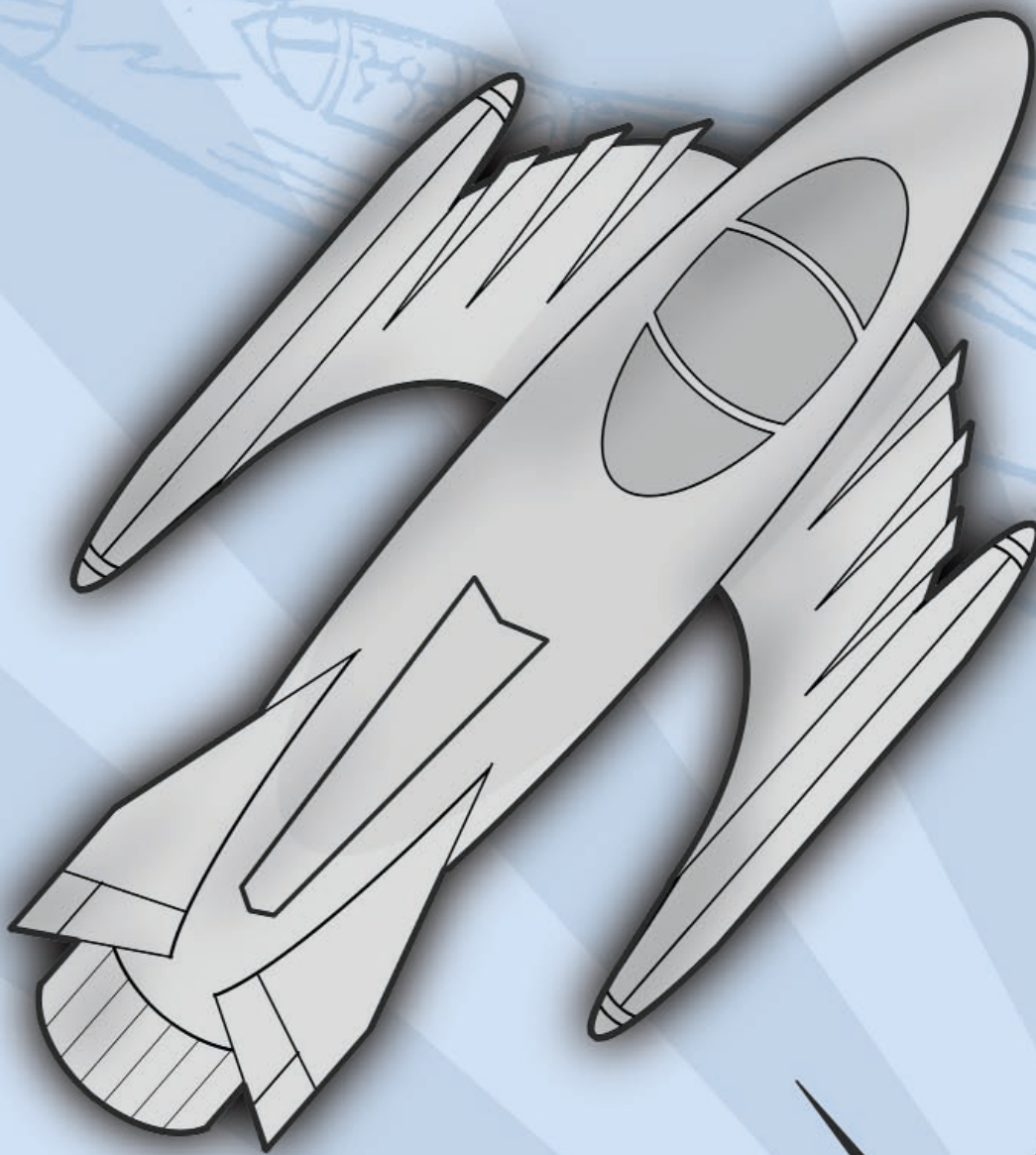
Restriction: Mil (+3)

Adventure Hooks

Welcome to the world of the future.... Welcome to 2006! The Earth, unified at last, has colonized the solar system. From the waving fields of red wheat on Mars, to the sky-cities of Jupiter, peace and prosperity reign. The guardians of this peace, the Rocket Patrol, travel the spacelanes in their gleaming silver rocket ships, defending the solar system from pirates, invaders and cosmic disaster. The Player-Characters are all members of the Rocket Patrol, and respond to mission dispatches from Rocket Patrol Central, on the Moon.

Missions include:

- Defending farmers on Mars from ancient giant robots that have burst out of an archaeological dig on Olympus Mons.
- Going into the asteroid belt to hunt down a secret pirate base rumored to exist there.
- Joining the Pluto Squadron to form the first line of defense against a vast alien armada that is invading the solar system!



■ The Rocket Ranger

■ The Atomic Marauder

The Marauder is a perfect example of an aggressor rocket ship. Vessels like this are found in the arsenals of space pirates, evil Galactic despots, and faceless alien invaders. *The Atomic Marauder* is extremely maneuverable, owing to its unique wing design, and wickedly fast as well, making it a extreme threat in any dogfight.

Crew: 1
Passengers: 0
Cargo: 200 lb.
Init: +1
Maneuver: +2
Top Speed: 1100 (110)
Defense: 6
Hardness: 10
Hit Points: 35
Size: G
Purchase DC: 40
Restriction: Mil (+3)

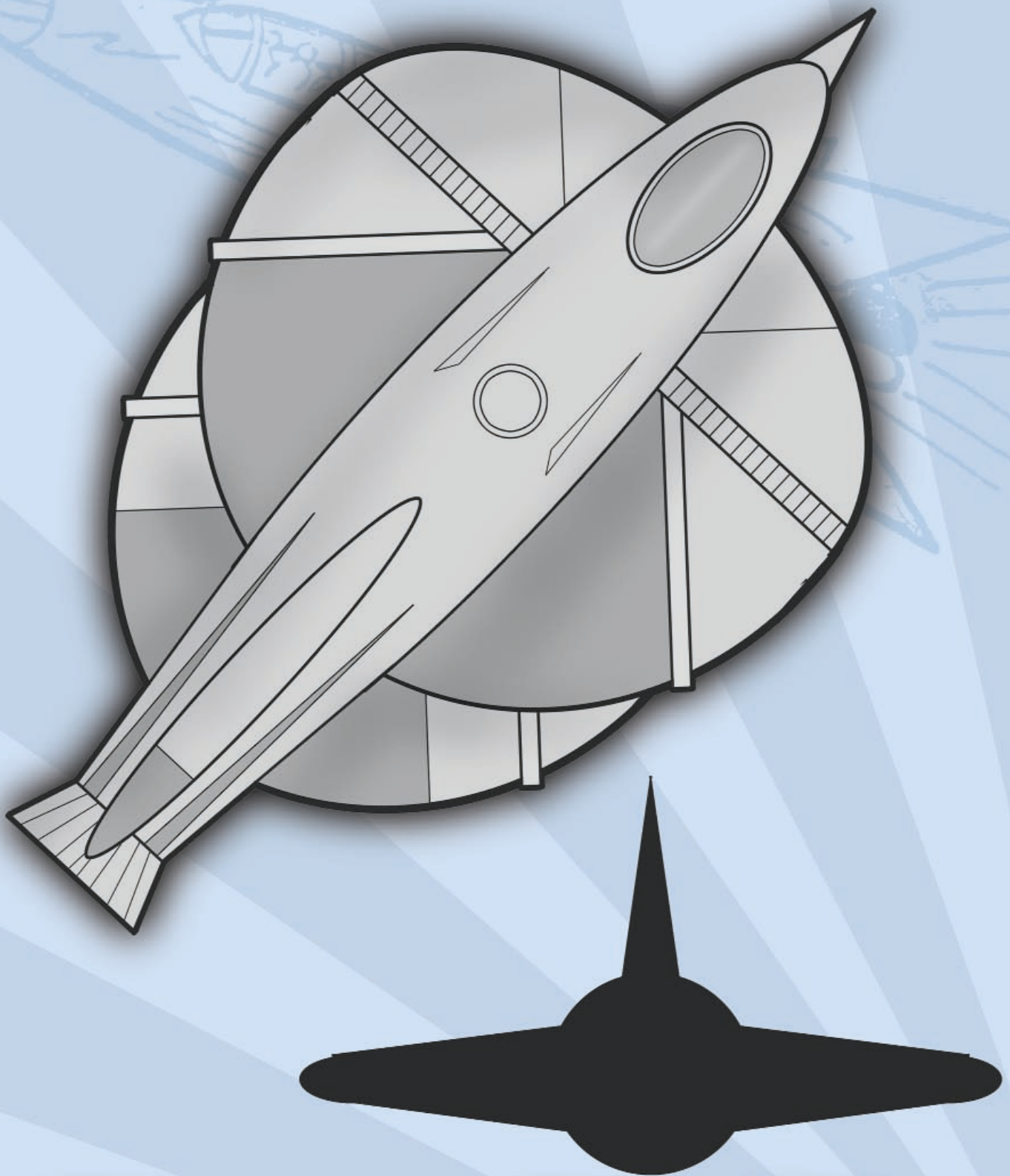
Electrocharge Distintegrator: A devastating weapon which fires an incandescent lance of electricity which breaks down the molecular bonds of the target. It is extremely draining on the power supply of *The Atomic Marauder*, and the designers, unwilling to sacrifice the speed and maneuverability that is the *Marauders* stock and trade, have constructed the weapon with a built-in limiter that only allows it to be fired once every other turn.

Damage: 4d10
Critical: 20
Damage Type: Energy
Range Increment: 150 feet
Rate of Fire: Single (every other turn)
Magazine: Unlimited (runs off the atomic reactor that powers the *Marauder*)
Size: Large
Weight: 60 lbs
Purchase DC: included with the vehicle
Restriction: Mil (+3)

The vessel is armed with a single, forward-mounted Electrocharge Disintegrator (fired from the nose of the vessel). Normal tactics for *Atomic Marauder* pilots are to engage an enemy, avoid fire via the ship's uncanny maneuverability, and angle for a single killing shot from behind.

Adventure Hooks

- For a 1930s pulp adventure: An alien, piloting an *Atomic Marauder*, crash-lands in the farm fields outside the campaign's main city. The reactor is out of fuel, and so the Alien needs to acquire large quantities of radium, which he begins to steal from scientific laboratories all over the city, aided by a robot carried as cargo on his *Marauder*, and members of the local criminal syndicate.
- Kung the Ruthless, evil ruler of the planet Astra, has plans to conquer the galaxy. His fleet's primary weapon is the *Atomic Marauder*. The PCs will have to figure out a way to counter the advantage of the rocket ship's unearthly maneuverability if they wish to defeat the forces of Kung!



■ The Atomic Marauder

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